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## Statewide Access to Online Resources Talking Points July 2022

- We very much appreciate the support Illinois legislators have shown for libraries, including continued support of per capita funding for public and school libraries and for library systems. Without this funding, libraries and systems would not be able to provide all of the programs and services that make them such a valuable part of their communities. The increasing demand for online resources is a new priority that has intensified during the pandemic and shows no sign of slowing down. Many libraries cannot afford these resources with current funding levels.
- The \$5 million dollar appropriation for a statewide online resources package represents a relatively small portion of the state budget and can have a positive impact on every single person in Illinois, and libraries of all types (academic, public, school, and specialized) throughout the state.
- Illinois is one of only two states that does not currently offer statewide access to a core group of online resources. (The other is Colorado.)
- The selected online resources will be available without charge to the approximately 13 million Illinois residents of all ages, including the 1 million residents who do not currently have a library card or access to library service.
- Illinois public libraries report a 33% increase in use of electronic resources since 2015. This growing trend intensified during the pandemic and beyond.
- Public libraries alone spent nearly \$28 million on electronic materials in 2019 – 33% of their total collection expenditures. This figure does not include dollars spent on electronic materials by academic, school, and specialized libraries.
- Online resources provide access to authoritative information found in magazines; newspapers; business, scientific, and scholarly journals; and other authoritative reference works. This information is carefully researched, written, and updated by experts. Much of it is only available online. It is expensive to create and is not available for free on the internet.
- Libraries are operating under ever-dwindling financial resources and some cannot afford online resources at all. Most school libraries fall into this category, even though students are high on the list of those needing access to the high-quality, easy-to-access information these resources provide.
- Because libraries across the state provide widely differing levels of access to online resources, this has resulted in a tremendous inequity of available information for Illinois residents. Having access to a core package of resources would level the playing field and ensure that everyone in the state had an equal opportunity to meet their information needs, whether they had access to a library or not.

- There is a concern about students falling behind. Many do not have access to a school library. Others do not have access to online resources other students have due to their financial situation at home. Having resources that are available to all Illinois students will greatly help with this problem.
- Currently, many libraries are purchasing the same online resources, resulting in unnecessary duplication. The appropriation would eliminate this duplication of resources throughout the state, resulting in a more efficient use of tax dollars and other library funding.
- The information available in online resources can fill a wide variety of needs. Consumers can find objective comparisons of different brands before making major purchases. Students can explore opposing viewpoints on controversial issues. Job-seekers can get help finding employment. Entrepreneurs can find tools to help get their business started. Retirees can learn about new hobbies to ease their sense of isolation. Everyone can find resources to help meet their lifelong learning goals. These are just a few of many examples of the valuable and essential information that can be found in authoritative online resources.